

## WSDOT AVIATION

Airports are critical links in the Washington State Transportation System. WSDOT Aviation's mission is to promote the integration of aviation into the Washington State Transportation System to meet the increasing demand for public transportation. WSDOT Aviation is charged with advancing the State's aviation interest in four critical areas: preservation, capacity, safety and the environment. State Policy Direction in each of these critical areas is accomplished by a variety of WSDOT Aviation programs.

## AVIATION MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Provides oversight for all state governmental aviation activities, enforcement of aviation laws in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and coordination of aviation efforts under the Growth Management Act. Provides information on air transportation issues to governmental agencies and the public. Registers general aviation aircraft and resident pilots, licenses aircraft dealers in Washington, and inspects local public use airports.

## LOCAL AIRPORT AID

Provides state grants and technical assistance to municipalities for construction, improvement, and repair of local public use airports. Projects include lighting, runway paving, resurfacing, visual aids, crack sealing, and painting.

## STATE AIRPORT PROGRAM

Provides funding for preservation, maintenance, and improvements to the state-owned or operated airports, which are primarily maintained for emergency purposes.

## AIR SEARCH & RESCUE

Provides coordination and participates in aviation search and rescue missions. Offers education to maintain an effective volunteer search and rescue force and provide search and accident prevention information to Washington pilots.

## AVIATION PLANNING

Identifies the characteristics and needs of Washington's system of airports, including system inventory, forecasting, economic analyses, pavement management, land use compatibility, capacity needs, navigational improvements and capital needs. Maintains physical inventory of airports, adjacent land uses, inter-modal connections, cargo and air carrier movements; jobs, wages and sales output assessments; rural airport economic analysis; based aircraft and operations forecasts; and pavement conditions. Recommends maintenance plans for the 130 public use airports in Washington.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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## An Evolving Aviation System

Aviation in Washington began as a mix of self-help and pioneer spirit. State government entered into airport activities in 1919, slightly over 15 years after Wilbur and Orville Wright flew the first plane at Kitty Hawk.

In 1947, Washington State Department of Transportation established the "Aeronautics Commission" to facilitate the development of an adequate system of public use airports, promote aviation safety, and airmark towns and cities. It was not until 1970 that Washington's first State Airport System Plan was completed. As our communities and the complexity of our economies have grown, the State has played an increasingly important role in protecting the capacity and enhancing the safety of our airways.

Today our State Airport System Plan is an interdependent system of 129 public use airports serving over 30 million passengers each year.



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# Aviation

## 2004 Strategic & Business Plan Highlights

### What issues drive these recommendations?

Washington's aviation system is made up of 129 public use airports owned by cities, counties, public ports, and the state. The system provides critical transportation linkages for people, goods and public services (fire, medical and search and rescue). It plays a critical role as a lifeline to and from isolated rural communities, especially for medical and emergency services. It is an essential component of Washington State's overall transportation system.

Airports play a vital role in the state's economy by facilitating jobs and commerce. Washington's general aviation airport system annually generates 7,600 jobs, \$140 million in wages, and \$490 million in total sales output.

The aviation system is highly dynamic, but in spite of its importance to the Washington economy, the combined forces of benign neglect, an antiquated funding base, a fluctuating economy and local land use conflict threaten its existence.

At its current rate, 25% of the total aviation system will have failed runways by 2016. Ten million dollars per year are needed just to maintain pavement condition. Of particular concern is the inadequate tax base of rural airports to adequately maintain their critical aviation link.

The grass-roots nature of Washington's aviation system is one of its greatest strengths, and has sustained the system on a shoestring. Over 500 aviators volunteer over 16,000 hours each year, whether they are installing a sprinkler system at a state airport or flying a search grid for a missing aircraft. Given limited resources, WSDOT Aviation must strategically focus its energy on activities that most effectively respond to the policy framework established by the Commission and legislature. (See box at left.) In 2002, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) recommended that WSDOT Aviation work with aviation stakeholders in the delivery of services and projects through an advisory committee. The 2003 Legislature subsequently called for WSDOT Aviation to review its business practices.

### How was the 2004 Strategic & Business Plan developed?

WSDOT's Aviation Advisory Committee challenged WSDOT Aviation to develop a strategic approach to the following questions:

- Are we positioned to respond to a rapidly changing aviation environment?
- Are we using our limited resources effectively and efficiently to meet the State's interests in aviation? What should our key priorities be?
- What strategic changes need to be made to meet the State's aviation policy, i.e., preservation, safety, capacity and environmental protection?

To answer these questions, three study groups convened during the Summer of 2003 to provide strategic advice in the areas of education, search and rescue, and the state system plan. Those recommendations have been reviewed by the Aviation Advisory Committee as well as by various stakeholder groups, and the WSDOT Aviation has given substantial weight to this input in shaping its 2004 Strategic and Business Plan.



## WSDOT Aviation Policy Framework

(Adopted 1998, Washington Transportation Commission)

It is in the State's interest that:

- Aviation facilities and services be preserved that provide access for all regions of the state to the nation's air transportation system, provide for emergency management, and support local economies.
- Transportation by air be safe.
- There be sufficient airport capacity to respond to growth in demand to ensure access across the state, the nation and the world.
- Negative environmental impacts of airports on people and the natural environment be mitigated.



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# Aviation 2004 Strategic & Business Plan Priorities

## Airport Capacity & Preservation

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many airports in Washington were constructed over 60 years ago. Pavement conditions have deteriorated significantly and reconstruction is needed. Ninety-five percent of aircraft fuel is exempt from taxes. The current funding sources for WSDOT Aviation are based upon registration fees and aviation fuel taxes. When combined with federal funds, these taxes generate less than half of the funds needed for general pavement repairs.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH

- Strive to maintain serviceability and fairness of current public investments in the aviation system, taking into account different classes of airports.
- Maximize value and impact of public investment in the aviation system statewide.
- Meet priority needs of the aviation system, as identified in the Aviation System Strategic Plan while continuing to support needs of local airports through alternative funding sources.
- Support state security priorities.

### 2004 ACTIONS

- Pursue flexible funding options including the Public Works Trust Fund and private-public partnerships. As a prerequisite for state funding, require a demonstrated commitment with local matches that factor input and ideas from key stakeholder groups.
- Leverage Federal Airport Improvement Program funds to the greatest extent possible.
- Explore revisions to revenue mechanisms, including fuel tax exemptions, economic incentive provisions for non-revenue producing land, and lease-hold revenue improvements.
- Seek policy direction on WSDOT Aviation's role in assessing future commercial capacity needs in the Puget Sound region.
- Continue implementation of state airport security program.
- Develop a process by which some state airports could be returned to local governments for management.



WSDOT Aviation thanks the members of the System Plan, Education and Search and Rescue study teams and the Aviation Advisory Committee for their insight and counsel in helping shape the 2004 Strategic and Business Plan. For complete copies of each study team's recommendations and WSDOT Aviation's 2004 Strategic and Business Plan, please go to [www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation).

## Education & Outreach

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

State law requires that WSDOT Aviation address aviation education, but it does not specify what type of education is required, nor does it provide any description of what approach should be taken. Further, there is a low level of awareness about the role of aviation in the state's transportation system and economy, and about the need for investment in the aviation infrastructure.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH

- State education and outreach activities should be directly related to Washington's aviation interest or need. WSDOT Aviation should lead in shaping a common vision for aviation education and careers and in enhancing public awareness of the value of aviation to Washington State.
- The state should ensure that airport managers and sponsors have the education tools they need to effectively preserve and maintain the state's airports.
- The state should also continue outreach with local jurisdictions to enhance airports and their utilization.

### 2004 ACTIONS

- WSDOT sponsored clinics should continue when there is a need, but not duplicate services offered by private institutions. WSDOT should renew education outreach to airport managers and initiate outreach to colleges and universities to encourage curricula addressing compatible land use planning around airports.
- WSDOT Aviation should identify partnering opportunities to support education opportunities sponsored by state and federal agencies, starting with an inventory of information resources and projected education needs in Washington and the region.
- WSDOT Aviation should serve as an information clearinghouse on aviation education to:
  - › Help create comprehensive education strategy – common vision that will be implemented by all partners.
  - › Facilitate a common education and outreach vision for all aviation partners.
  - › Develop communication mechanisms to pull resources together and build on data that is already available.
  - › Provide decision makers with the information to make good investment decisions in maintaining a healthy system of airports in Washington.
  - › Advocate for improved resources for the programs to meet aviation employment needs.
  - › Coordinate the recognition of aviation education programs and potential partners which model "best practices."
- WSDOT Aviation should initiate discussions with the Higher Education Board to advocate for improved and targeted coordination with the diverse aviation programs.

## Safety

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

WSDOT Aviation is responsible for coordinating state Aviation Emergency Services operations, including Air Search and Rescue. WSDOT Aviation relies mostly on volunteer resources to conduct operations with which it has been mandated. The volunteer force consists of pilots and non-pilots who are trained and certified by WSDOT Aviation for disaster relief and search and rescue. Funding for the Air Search and Rescue program comes from annual pilot registration fees.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH

Maintain WSDOT Aviation's leadership role in Aviation Emergency Services and Air Search and Rescue. Work diligently to improve program efficiency, while continuing to explore ways to achieve funding stability and a more cost-effective administrative framework. Continue to provide education support for pilot safety.

### 2004 ACTIONS

- Develop a comprehensive SAR Plan to facilitate better response times, quality standards, a clear structure, and definition of roles and responsibilities.
- Continue to improve WSDOT Aviation's volunteer base in their recruitment and retention of volunteer corps.
- Assess public knowledge and expectations regarding search and rescue and how it works—do people know what is involved when a search is initiated?
- Develop program to reduce false Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) alarms.
- Develop a rational framework for search and rescue funding with the continued involvement of Washington Air Search and Rescue, Civil Air Patrol, Washington State Patrol, and other program partners. Place particular focus on finding more stable funding sources and more cost-effective administrative mechanisms.

### Washington state's aviation system consists of 129 public use airports.



## Policy & Strategic Planning

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Airports are identified as essential public facilities. The Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 47.08 requires the state to prepare an aviation system plan as a component of the Washington Transportation Plan. However, a process is needed to identify regional aviation needs at the local level that roll up into defining a statewide aviation system that can be integrated into Washington's multi-modal transportation system.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH

Anticipate and strategically respond to emerging aviation system trends and issues. Increase consistency between FAA, and State of Washington in interpreting and complying with local aviation policies, rules, and regulations by class of airport, recognizing that different types of airports have different regulatory and policy needs.

### 2004 ACTIONS

- Develop a prioritized state system of airports that designates Airports of Statewide Significance (just as Highways of Statewide Significance are designated in the Washington Transportation Plan), relying heavily on local input through the regional transportation planning (RTP/MPO) process. WSDOT Aviation will launch an education and outreach effort to all participants.
- Identify gaps in availability of aviation facilities for emergency medical and commercial needs.
- Develop projected cargo needs to support funding and policy decisions about aviation system priorities.
- Examine the state's role regarding the long-term issue of aviation system capacity.
- Develop a land use tool kit that can assist local governments in land use planning around airports.
- Pursue action to allow airports to provide wetland and storm-water mitigation off-site, to avoid dangerous conflicts between water fowl and landing/departing aircraft.

